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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to identify practices and trends in elementary and secondary education literature applicable to early childhood student teacher supervision. The paper begins by reviewing the relevant literature on both historical and current perspectives on early childhood teacher education programs. Then, the goals of student teaching, the characteristics of student teachers, the role of supervisors, and characteristics of effective supervisors are explored. The goals of student teaching include developing reflective individuals and affording students opportunities to implement instructive practices in a classroom and to interact with students. Supervisors should serve as a catalyst, encouraging students to formulate broad perspectives on teaching by reflecting on their student teaching experience, and helping students integrate theoretical frameworks with classroom realities. Several supervision models are outlined. Finally, six recommendations for early childhood supervision practices are suggested: (1) supervisors should emphasize constructivist methods so that student teachers learn to be self-directed in their learning; (2) supervisors should be cognitive coaches and not evaluators in guiding student teachers' learning; (3) supervisors should allow frequent opportunities for collaboration, inquiry, and reflection about the supervisor's own teaching; (4) supervisors must teach student teachers how to reflect on their own teaching; (5) the student teacher's ability to reflect upon and assess his or her own teaching and learning should be an evaluation criterion; and (6) the flexibility that qualitative methods offer for student teacher evaluation makes them appropriate for the diverse nature of early childhood settings. (Contains 32 references.) (ND)

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The Role of the Supervisor:
Meeting the Needs of Early Childhood Preservice Teachers

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The Role of the Supervisor: Meeting the Needs of Early Childhood Preservice Teachers

The literature in teacher education reveals a wealth of research on student teaching in elementary and secondary settings. Researchers have described many weaknesses in teacher preparation programs, particularly in the area of field experiences. (Goodlad, 1990; Darling-Hammond & Goodwin, 1993) Many educators have studied and written about methods of restructuring these experiences to be the most beneficial for student teachers (Cochran-Smith, 1991; Colton & Sparks-Langer, 1992). However, most of these studies have focused primarily on elementary and secondary student teaching, leaving a lack of research available on student teaching experiences specific to early childhood settings.

Saracho (1993) speculates that the reason for the fewer number of studies in early childhood as compared to elementary and secondary education is likely due to researchers' desire to study aspects of teaching which can be helpful to educators in many fields. Another possible contributor to the lack of research is the fact that early childhood is a relatively small field when compared to elementary and secondary education. Saracho suggests that much of what is known about early childhood education has been extrapolated from other areas of educational research and generalized to early childhood settings.

Additionally, very little is known about the specific roles of the supervisor within the student teaching program itself. As Marrou (1989) writes, "When clinical preservice teacher education is discussed, it is rare when the university supervisor becomes central

to the discussion. . . Few job descriptions for role behavior of university supervisors exist, and when they do, they are lacking in breadth and depth" (p. 13). If early childhood student teaching experiences are to be improved, it is important that schools of education examine current supervision practices and restructure their early childhood student teaching programs to meet the specialized requirements of their students.

The purpose of this paper is to identify practices and trends within the broad base of elementary and secondary literature that seem of value to early childhood student teacher supervision. In selecting such pieces, we examined past and present models of supervision to determine those that would be included in this review. Because of their dialectic rather than didactic methods, we suggest that those practices which support a reflective, constructivist philosophy of teacher education are most appropriate for application to early childhood programs. We therefore chose to review the literature that explored these issues, as well as a few of the studies that directly addressed early childhood student teaching programs.

In the first section of this paper, we will discuss the setting of our problem, early childhood teacher education programs. Once we have addressed both historical and current perspectives, we will describe student teacher and supervisor characteristics that we have identified to provide the background for the early childhood supervision practices we will later recommend. We conclude the paper with suggestions for future practice and research.

Early Childhood Teacher Education

It is only since the 1960's that early childhood has evolved into a serious discipline of educational study (Spodek, 1983). Although many early reformers, philosophers, and psychologists such as Froebel, Montessori, Dewey, Piaget, and Skinner addressed the specialized learning needs of young children (Spodek & Brown,1993), schools have only recently begun to change their perspectives on the education of young children. Spodek (1983) describes the earlier programs for young children as being focused on nurturing the child. However, when federal funds became available through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, creating programs such as Project Head Start and Project Follow Through, the focus shifted to the developmental and academic needs of the child. With these new programs came the need to educate teachers who would be qualified to staff them.

Although early childhood education is still a relatively new discipline, awareness of its importance can be seen in that many colleges of education are now offering four-year degrees in early childhood education. Saracho (1993) describes much of what exists in current early childhood educational programs as a combination of general education, professional education, and practicum experiences. Her recommendations for the components of early childhood teacher preparation are not unlike those of most teacher education programs: recruitment and selection, general education, professional foundations, instructional knowledge, practice, and program modification.

Saracho further suggests that early childhood teacher education programs could benefit from including opportunities for students to carefully observe and analyze roles of the teacher in the early childhood classroom setting (1988, 1993). After implementing such a component in an early childhood teacher preparation program, Saracho (1988) found that with adequate training, students could successfully utilize a variety of observation systems and accurately identify the roles of the early childhood teachers they observed.

While a few researchers such as Spodek and Saracho have devoted attention to the areas of early childhood teacher education programs, this is not the norm. It appears that schools of education often treat elementary and early childhood field experiences as one. For example, in a quantitative study on using problem solving techniques to improve student teaching, Vanderbilt University (1988) used the same treatments with both early childhood and elementary student teachers. The supervision techniques, teaching analyses, and the evaluation systems included with the study were all the same. The program did not provide for the variability between early childhood and elementary field placements. Student teaching programs are likely designed for efficiency and possibly are structured to meet state certification requirements; however, effective programs ought to reflect that instructional methods used in a sixth grade classroom are dramatically different than the methods used in a pre-kindergarten classroom.

It is our contention that those responsible for teacher education programs should take these differences into account and be prepared to offer guidance suited to the needs of their student teachers'

various placements. When considering ways to structure early childhood teacher education programs, schools of education should examine the existing research on student teachers and supervisors. In the next section we address the literature which we find to be the most salient in this regard.

Characteristics and Roles of Student Teachers and Supervisors

Goals of Student Teaching

One of the goals of student teaching as revealed by the literature is to develop reflective individuals. Zeichner and Liston (1987) defined reflective action as "the active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the consequences to which it leads" (p. 24). The supervisor should serve as a catalyst who encourages student teachers to formulate broader perspectives on teaching by reflecting on their student teaching experiences. Veale (1989) reports that student teachers benefit from daily reflection and analysis since it "assists students to integrate their developing roles as teachers and generates a disposition to continue reflecting about their teaching as they enter the profession" (p. 108).

Another goal of student teaching is to afford students the opportunity to implement instructional practices in a classroom and interact with students. A study of 191 education majors (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990) suggests that after student teaching, student teachers are less sure that schools can overcome the limitations of home environment and family background, but they remain optimistic about their personal ability to motivate and be effective with difficult students.

Field experiences, particularly student teaching, offer teacher candidates the opportunity to "learn practical concepts as they apply theory in a practice situation with help and guidance from cooperating teachers and college supervisors" (Saracho, 1993, p. 420). Saracho (1993) further suggests that early childhood teacher education programs could benefit from including opportunities for students to carefully observe and analyze roles of the teacher in the early childhood classroom setting. Supervisors can play a pivotal role in "reinforcing philosophy in school settings and helping student teachers integrate the theoretical frameworks with classroom realities...as they negotiate between the differing norms of the university and the school site" (Grossman, 1990, p. 133).

Characteristics of Student Teachers

By seeking to understand the research findings on characteristics of student teachers, supervisors can make sound informed decisions. Lofquist (1986) provides a helpful categorization of nine types of student teachers which she characterizes as the parrot, the clone, the personality kid, the motormouth, the turtle, the natural, the sergeant, Mr./Mrs. Sugar, and Mr./Mrs. Normal. By identifying such characteristics of student teachers, supervisors are better equipped to meet their individual needs.

Supervisors can greatly enhance their role by learning what research reveals about the stresses experienced by student teachers. MacDonald (1992) suggests that student teachers show high levels of anxiety before student teaching, but that little is done to alleviate this anxiety or minimize its effect on performance. Student teachers often experience increased frustration and disappointment after

their first attempts at teaching (Rodriguez, 1993). Boydell (1986) described the first phase as being characterized by the student teacher's concern for "safety and survival," which is later replaced by concerns for their own adequacy as teachers and concerns related to instructional practices.

Other concerns reported by student teachers include experiencing stress related to concerns about working with a cooperating teacher, conforming to the style of their cooperating teacher, nad whether there was freedom for them to experiment in their work. Student teachers also experienced stress when they did not know what the cooperating teacher expected of them when they were being evaluated (MacDonald, 1992).

Three phases of student teaching are identified by Cohn and Gellman (1988). Phase one lasts for three weeks and is the time when student teachers are most concerned with coping with initial anxieties and transitional difficulties and establishing their presence in the classroom. Phase two lasts approximately nine weeks and is characterized by student teachers beginning to inquire about the craft and analysis of teaching, seeking to make relationships, generating alternatives, and drawing conclusions. Phase three lasts approximately four weeks. It is during this time that the student teacher focuses on planning, analysis, and treatment of classroom performance.

The Role of the Supervisor

Supervisors serve as a link between fieldwork and coursework, "commuting between the worlds of the university and the school" (Grossman, 1990, p. 132). Some have suggested that the primary

role of the supervisor is that of defining and communicating the purposes and expectations to be fulfilled by the student and cooperating teacher, but Boydell (1986) suggests that the supervisor's responsibilities are much more complex and varied.

Henry and Beasley (1989) define the supervisor's role as "the watchdog for the completion of university requirements during student teaching, the facilitator of relationships among teachers, student teachers and cooperating teachers, and the personal confidant of anyone in the triad who chooses to confide" (p. 55). They identified the most common supervisory activities as giving personal assistance, serving as an intermediary in misunderstandings, helping student teachers evaluate performance and set goals, and serving as a teacher on a one-to-one basis with student teachers.

Supervisors can positively affect the student teaching experience by providing students with guidance in learning how educational theories relate to practice (Rodriguez, 1993). A primary purpose of student teaching is to make connections between coursework and classroom experience. The goal is to "foster within student teachers an inquiry orientation which can eventually empower them to be autonomous and analytical professionals rather than technicians" (Cohn & Gellman, 1988, p. 8).

Supervision also requires analysis and consideration of student teachers' intentions and beliefs (Zeichner & Liston, 1987). During observations supervisors collect detailed field notes which are used to document a student teacher's growth and progress. Data collection can be utilized to assist student teachers in developing the necessary

competencies required for them to perform effectively as beginning teachers.

Niemeyer (1988) identifies four broad categories of supervisory practice that include: (a) staging - using knowledge to form some idea of what will be seen in the classroom, (b) screening - assessment of classroom environments, (c) signaling - demeanor, body language, greetings, gestures, and (d) systems - developing methods of school entry and exit; networking. Blank and Heathington (1987) found that the activities of university supervisors included evaluating and providing constructive criticism, defining and communicating expectations, and helping student teachers become increasingly involved in continuing instructional activities.

In addition to these many responsibilities, cooperating teachers often have a different set of expectations for the university supervisor. A questionnaire completed by 136 cooperating teachers in central Texas revealed that supervisors were expected to: (a) be well organized and have clear expectations and guidelines, (b) be informative and on target with instructional guidelines, (c) provide written observations of student teaching lessons that assessed student teachers' abilities, (d) set high standards for student teachers and expect them to be met, (e) develop successful partnerships with the student teacher and cooperating teacher, (f) visit classrooms on a frequent basis, and (g) share helpful teaching aids and techniques (Marrou, 1989, p. 17).

Characteristics of Effective Supervisors

Research indicates that there are specific attributes and traits associated with effective supervisors. Effective listeners, perceptive observers, and effective communicators were all phrases used to describe effective supervisors. Attitudes possessed by effective supervisors included commitment to the task, acceptance of student teachers, trust, and a giving spirit. High-quality university supervisors were characterized as being conscientious, caring, empathetic, open-minded, tactful, adaptable to many situations, and possessing positive problem-solving attitudes (Anderson, Major, & Mitchell, 1992).

Usually supervisors have a minimum of three years teaching experience, but very often they receive little or nor formal training in supervision of student teachers (Anderson, Major, & Mitchell, 1992). A study conducted by Kremer-Hayton (1991) investigating the differences in novice and expert supervisors as revealed by their journal entries concluded that expert supervisors yielded statistically higher scores in reflection and criticism, knowledge and change, and ideology and values. Novice supervisors mentioned human relations and difficulties more often than the experts. Novices also consistently indicated that they had relied upon theory and research as sources of knowledge and were disappointed with the information available to them.

Rust (1988) collected data from interviews and journal entries of supervisors to determine "how supervisors think about their practice and how they communicate their knowledge of teaching to student teachers" (p. 57). Her findings suggest that experience and

ability to reflect on and talk about teaching appear to be significant predictors of successful supervisory practice.

Smith and Alvermann (1985) administered a questionnaire to 83 early childhood majors enrolled in a reading methods course to determine characteristics of effective supervisors. The results indicated that effective supervisors were those who had positive supportive attitudes and clearly communicated to student teachers the expectations and requirements of field experience. The effective supervisor was one who was available to students to answer questions, give reassurances, and provide assistance with problems. The results of Smith's and Alvermann's study also suggest that student teachers appreciated supervisors' honest appraisals of their teaching. They valued the suggestions made by the supervisors concerning the observed teaching situations and extensions of lessons taught that were offered immediately following observations.

Given the wealth of information available concerning effective supervisory roles and practices, it is important that working models that guide the practices of university supervisors reflect this knowledge. Efforts to develop models or theoretical constructs for supervision have been published by a few educational researchers. These models will be reviewed in the section that follows.

Models of Supervision

Within the last ten years, researchers have attempted to classify models of supervision. Maroufi (1988) suggests that there are three basic orientations to supervisory practices that he labels behavioristic, cognitive developmental, and humanistic. The behavioristic supervisor is one who seeks to change the way student

teachers act or behave in the classroom, while the cognitive developmental supervisor is concerned with helping student teachers and their students learn to process information and develop intellectual capabilities. The humanistic supervisor is defined as one who is primarily interested in helping student teachers to interpret their experiences as significant and interpersonal.

Zahorik (1988) defines three types of university supervision as: (1) behavior prescription - supervisor instructs student teacher to use certain instructional and management techniques and avoid others, (2) idea interpretation - supervisor presents beliefs about what classrooms and schools should be like, (3) person support - supervisor facilitates student teacher decision-making by creating a climate that permits and encourages student teacher to think for themselves.

Cochran-Smith (1991) is another researcher who identifies three distinctly different models of supervision, including consonance, critical dissonance, and collaborative resonance. The consonance program is one that trains student teachers by constructing for them both their knowledge and the language used to describe it. The second model, labeled critical dissonance, aims to help student teachers develop stronger, more critical perspectives that confront issues of race, class, power, labor, and gender. Lastly, the collaborative resonance model seeks to link what students learn about teaching from their field-based school experiences with what they learn from their university experiences through mutually-constructed learning communities. Cochran-Smith suggests that collaborative resonance supervision is the model of choice since it

aims to "provide students with the skills needed to critique standard procedures and to link theory with practice as well as the resources needed to learn from and reform teaching throughout their careers" (p. 109).

An additional model offered by Hegland (1984) is the enabler model. It is comprised of four steps which include: (a) supervisor and student teacher agree on philosophy and goals, (b) supervisor and student teacher develop mutual trust and respect in an atmosphere of open communication, (c) supervisor identifies teacher strengths while student teacher identifies professional needs and goals; both agree on a timetable for accomplishment of goals, and (d) supervisor acts as a resource person to select appropriate training resources relevant to student teacher-identified needs.

The theory of developmental supervision has been applied to student teaching. This theory developed by Glickman and Gordon (1987) is based on the following three assumptions: (a) student teachers operate at different levels of professional development, (b) student teachers need to be supervised in different ways, and (c) the long-range goal of supervision should be to increase every student teacher's ability to grow toward higher stages of thought. Developmental supervision is composed of three stages, including diagnosis of student teacher's functioning level (diagnostic phase), matching supervisory approach to the student teacher's functioning level (tactical phase), and accelerating the development of the student teacher by stimulating problem-solving abilities.

Hanhan's 1988 study of an early childhood student teaching program described an open-ended model that could be used in a

variety of student teaching settings. The program focused on using qualitative methods of evaluation. The supervisor is able to concentrate on the individual instead of comparing the student teacher to a set of teaching characteristics. Student teachers assess their own teaching using reflective and descriptive techniques.

Colton and Sparks-Langer (1992) explain that a thoughtful, self-directed teacher is the desired outcome of the student teaching experience. The supervisor's job is to foster the student's construction of knowledge by diagnosing where the student teacher is on a developmental continuum and providing scaffolding to the next higher levels. This "bridge building" can be achieved through the use of cognitive coaching techniques in which the supervisor asks open-ended questions and encourages the student teacher to analyze his or her own teaching. Furthermore, Colton and Sparks-Langer assert that this relationship must be based on trust, which is best gained by the supervisor assuming a non-judgmental role.

Recommendations for Early Childhood Supervision Practices

Research on elementary supervision and student teaching practices, as well as models of supervision offered by researchers, suggest several possible implications for early childhood supervision practices. Precautions must be taken to insure that supervision practices borrowed from other fields encourage and support developmentally appropriate practice. Student teachers should readily observe parallel practices between their own classroom teaching strategies and those utilized by the university supervisor. Therefore, we suggest the following:

1. The supervisor should emphasize constructivist methods so that student teachers learn to be self-directed in their learning.

2. Supervisors should play the role of cognitive coach and not that of evaluator in guiding student teachers' learning.

3. Supervisors should provide student teachers with frequent opportunities for collaboration, inquiry, and reflection about their own teaching, as well as students' learning.

4. If the creation of reflective teachers is a desired outcome of teacher education programs, then supervisors must teach student teachers how to reflect on their own teaching.

5. Evaluation is a necessary component of student teaching, but an important criterion should be the student teacher's ability to reflect upon and assess his or her own teaching and learning.

6. The flexibility that qualitative methods offer for student teacher evaluation makes them particularly appropriate for the diverse nature of early childhood settings.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research

Over the past few years teacher educators have begun to realize effective supervision is vital to the quality of the student teaching experience (Veale, 1989). Although the university supervisor plays an important role in the final phase of teacher education, very little is known about the job's requirements, responsibilities, or impact.

We agree with Hegland's (1984) argument that research and theory is needed that specifically addresses the development of a philosophy of supervision congruent with the philosophy of teacher education and extend his argument to include early childhood

teacher education programs. One of the most common criticisms of teacher education is the absence of significant theory. There is a definite need to articulate a theoretical framework that is more comprehensive for early childhood education, particularly in regard to supervision.

More research is needed to specifically define the roles assumed by supervisors, particularly in early childhood where the existing traditional models seem inappropriate. As Saracho (1993) suggests, there are appropriate times to make generalizations from elementary research to early childhood. However, existing student teaching programs that utilize the same supervision techniques in early childhood and elementary settings must evaluate this decision to determine whether the same experiences are theoretically sound and benefical for both groups.

Studies addressing the preparation required for effective university supervision are rare. Topics such as the knowledge, beliefs, and judgment criteria of supervisors should be considered, as well as studies wholly focused on the supervisor's role. Descriptive and qualitative methods of naturalistic inquiry seem particularly appropriate.

The pedagogy of early childhood teacher education and of supervision have long been overlooked. Supervisors have a strong influence on the professional and academic growth of student teachers. They work with the students who are the future of our profession at a critical point in their careers--the beginning. Only with increased scholarly activity will we develop a more reliable

base of knowledge about the preparation of teachers and the supervisor's critical role in 'hat process.

If student teaching programs are to be a beneficial component of teacher education, schools of education must identify their objectives and continually assess their programs. Awareness of available research that impacts teacher education programs is vital. As early childhood education continues to become recognized and accepted as a field of its own, interest in research specific to early childhood will continue to grow at a rapid pace. It is the responsibility of schools of education to determine how best to utilize existing research to meet the needs of their early childhood student teachers. Only with increased scholarly activity will we develop a more reliable base of knowledge about the preparation of teachers and the supervisor's role in that process. We can think of no endeavor more worthy of our research, understanding, and esteem.

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